

Volume 1, Issue 6
August, 2013

GVRA INVESTS IN GEORGIA'S FUTURE

2014 Legislative Message:

**Georgia's Economic
Recovery & Growth MUST
include full Competitive
Employment for People
with disabilities –
GVRA is the solution**



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In any professional environment, staff must receive ongoing training or they will continue to perform only with previous practices and resources known to them. In order to optimally serve Georgians with disabilities, more than 160 GVRA employees participated in the 2013 Georgia Rehabilitation Council Training Conference. A number of additional activities surrounded the training: the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meeting, the GVRA monthly board meeting, the Vocational Rehabilitation Leadership Team (VRLT), and the initial public hearing regarding the changes to the Financial Needs Assessment policy. The experienced gained from participating is already impacting service delivery in the field.





IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Louise Hill

GVRA Board Vice Chair

At their first meeting last July, the new Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board elected Louise Hill to be Vice Chair. Over the past year Louise has been very effective in conducting Board meetings as needed for Chair Jimmy Defoor, participating in meetings and teleconferences with the Rehabilitation Services Administration, providing input to the VR State Plan, and performing other Board duties. Also, she

"Our slogan should be -The Focus is on Ability."

- Louise Hill

provided expertise in organizing and facilitating the excellent GVRA Leadership Conference on July 15 to kick off the "second mile" training for over 175 agency-wide leaders.

Living in Athens, Louise is a faculty member at the University of Georgia (UGA) J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development where her focus is in community leadership development programs. She earned an Associate degree from Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College, then a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Education from UGA. Louise first joined UGA in the College of Agriculture as Director of

Development and Alumni Relations in 1996 before transferring to the Fanning Institute in 2003.

Louise brings a special perspective to the Board as a person with a disability who received VR services that assisted her to return to work. She freely tells about her experience in going to bed on February 20, 2011 then waking the next morning not able to move her legs. Imagine Louise's terror and dismay! She quickly had to take control of the situation, especially because she had just moved her elderly mother into her home. After a week of tests and steroid treatments at Athens Regional Hospital, doctors gave Louise the diagnosis of idiopathic transverse myelitis, a very rare neurological disorder that impairs mobility. She was transferred to the Shepherd Center for two months of rehabilitation.

From the first day Louise prayed for strength and grace to deal with whatever was on her plate, and she says God has been good in helping her live with this disorder and gain strength and mobility. She was glad she already knew successful wheelchair users, so she knew she could resume her life after making adjustments. Also, Louise is thankful she had recently made renovations for her home to be accessible for her mother, so she was able to manage and



Louise Hill brings a special perspective to the Board as a person with a disability who received VR services that assisted her to return to work.

function independently at home with the addition of a wheelchair ramp.

As with most individuals with disabilities, the greatest challenge for Louise would be transportation. Shepherd staff researched many options with her and determined the best option would be a van conversion, especially in her job traveling all over the state doing leadership development. Shepherd referred her to the VR Program.

Contributor: Daronne Patterson

Louise Hill (continued)

Her VR Counselor agreed that a van conversion was appropriate for Louise's individual work plan and referred her to the VR Assistive Work Technology team. The Rehab Engineer assessed her needs and made recommendations for the right van equipment, while the Occupational Therapist helped Louise with better options while using the computer to alleviate problems with carpal tunnel. The Fanning Institute was a great employer, working with Louise to come back to work on a part-time basis in July until she could resume her fulltime duties, and her van was ready in December 2011.

Louise stated that it is an honor to serve on the Board, and she is excited with her recent reappointment for another three years along with Fay Loggins and Amy O'Dell. Louise is very impressed with the GVRA key leaders' passion and commitment for the agency's mission. She said: "Success will depend on the VR Counselors' leadership in being innovative and figuring out the best way to help people find and develop their abilities to allow them to work. Our slogan should be -The Focus is on Ability."



HR CORNER

During the month of June and July, GVRA Human Resources held several training sessions for managers and supervisors. During these sessions, information on new processes, procedures, and forms were reviewed. Managers and supervisors left the training with a detailed procedure manual to take with them to use as a reference guide.



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM: BEP Star Report



Mr. Mike Lee, BEP vendor (far left) with BEP Director Raj Gandy and GVRA Executive Director Greg Schmieg.

The lifelong commitment this licensed blind vendor manager has had towards the growth and positive development of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) was known for a number of years. It was really confirmed, however, in the early 1990's which is when he used his personal home as collateral to pay for the legal fees associated with the BEP's efforts to obtain the right to service all of the state of Georgia's interstate Rest Area and Welcome Center vending machines. Such an unselfish act is not often seen, but is certainly appreciated, especially since this particular act created over 14 employment opportunities to licensed blind vendors across the state.

Having been a vendor manager in the BEP for over 50 years, he has had the opportunity to serve in numerous roles within the program including but not limited to: Committee of Blind Vendor (CBV) Chairman for several terms; Finance and Retirement Committee member; a committee member of numerous training conferences over the years and a constant source of historical data for the BEP staff, as well as many of its former and current vendor managers. This vendor has always served as a strong advocate for the BEP during all of Georgia's legislative sessions, constantly trying to promote the wonderful opportunities that exist within the program. In addition, he has traveled the country to sit on panels and attend conferences to discuss the importance of preserving the priority of the Randolph Sheppard Act.



After he obtained his Contract Manager position located at

Fort Benning Army Post in Columbus over 10 years ago, he decided to put some of his blessings back into the BEP. He was one of the founding members of the BEP Vendor Retirement Committee and suggested that his 12% set-aside go solely towards the funding of the BEP retirement fund for all of Georgia's blind vendor managers. As a result of his contributions, all of our program blind vendors can look towards a retirement fund for years to come.

He sponsored food and refreshments for the GVRA TEAM 26 July Veterans job fair.



BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM

He has also worked tirelessly with the local Department of Labor and VR office, sponsoring countless job fairs and placing special effort on hiring individuals with disabilities.

As a result of his community involvement, in the past year this vendor has received:



- The International Association of Workforce Professionals (IAWP) Award
- The Veterans Best Friend Award
- The Dept of Defense's recognition of Innovation and Support of Men and Women in the National Guard and Reserve
- 2012 BEP Vendor of the Year Award

Most recently, this vendor and his foodservice staff have been rewarded with obtaining over 90% or above in all of its 50 monthly inspections. As a result, he started the 92.5% Club which signifies excellence in cooking, service and sanitation in the military foodservice industry. This September, over 25 management staff will be publicly recognized for exceeding 90% in these arenas.

He is a very beloved manager with one of the lowest employee turnover rates ever! Why is that? He shows appreciation and respect to his employees in many special ways:

-Last year, this vendor met with Union representatives and local community organizers and established a Voter Registration drive. Of his over 900 employees, this vendor was able to register over 330 of his employees who had not ever voted.

-Each year this vendor takes his employees and their spouses on an annual trip to show his appreciation for all their hard work by paying for their chartered bus, hotel, dinner and even providing spending money for the weekend. In addition, he takes the staff on an annual deep sea fishing trip later in the year.

It goes without saying that the contributions this licensed blind vendor has given to the BEP, to the soldiers of Fort Benning and the Columbus community over the years are immeasurable. Thus, it brings me great pleasure and extreme honor to formally recognize and commend a STAR of the BEP:

Mr. Michael Christopher Lee
a.k.a.
"Mike"



Contributor: Raj Gandy

Congratulations Carmen!

Carmen Hensley was selected as the August Employee of the Month. Legal Services Officer Rita McWhorter submitted the following recommendation:

“Ms. Henley takes her job responsibilities seriously. She writes the majority of the Investigative Plans (IPs) that are given to the fraud investigators and is very professional in her handling of cases for the Unit. Her commitment is reflected in her work with DAS staff and medical/psychological consultants to reach results that benefit the Unit, DAS and SSA.

Carmen Henley has worked very well in the CDI Unit, performing assigned tasks and meeting set deadlines in an efficient and timely matter. Her thorough research and follow-through have proven to be a great asset. Specifically, she has worked diligently to identify patterns and trends of claimants and family members who are potentially engaged in disability fraud.”

Carmen Henley receives the August 2013 Employee of the Month Award from Director Awilda Danko and her supervisor, Rita McWhorter

Contributions by Richard Gonter

Morale Building Committee Continues to Make Impact



MBC Members Kathy Beatty, Shelia Baskin, LaQuanda Harper and Susan Lloyd (from L to R)

In response to employees' requests for accessibility to fresh food, the Morale Building Committee (MBC) arranged for food trucks to service the Stone Mountain facility. Smiley's Street Eats visited on July 18th, serving approximately 100 employees. Grazing Here visited on August 6th, serving over 100 employees. The Morale Building Committee is also attempting to address employee concerns and suggestions regarding the dress code, as well as work unit coverage issues when an employee takes leave.



DAS employees visiting Smiley's Food Truck on July 18

GIB AWARDED ISO 9001: 2008

Following an extensive process expanding over eight months, the Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB) was awarded the international ISO 9001:2008 quality certification by Perry Johnson Registrar, an international leader in inspection, verification and certification of quality systems.

This certification process consisted of a comprehensive audit and review of quality systems for all phases of development, manufacturing and distribution of GIB products. The ISO 9001 certification is part of an ongoing quality improvement process that enables GIB to optimize its performance and continue to offer excellent goods and services to its customers for years to come.

According to Kevin Kelley, GIB Chief Executive Officer, GIB has implemented a Quality Management System that demonstrates a commitment by all employees to an on-time delivery of quality products and services to its customers.



CEO Kevin Kelly with Director of Quality Teresa Roberts

"You can be assured that quality products and services and complete customer satisfaction are GIB top priorities. The certification of our quality process, as well as having our safety process national recognized as a best practice, shows that we have not just an effective quality management system but an effective business management system" said Kelley.

Georgia Industries for the Blind, who's mission is to provide employment opportunities for people who are blind, is part of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Agency (GVRA) and operates 3 manufacturing facilities (Albany, Bainbridge, Griffin) and 2 service contracts (Robins AFB, Pendergrass). GIB employs almost 200 individuals with over 100 being blind. GIB is affiliated with National Industries for the Blind (NIB) the nation's largest employment resource for people who are blind. NIB is celebrating 75 years of securing federal contracts under the AbilityOne Program®, landmark legislation that has opened government markets to products and services produced by people who are blind or have severe disabilities.

Contributed by Louis Narimatsu

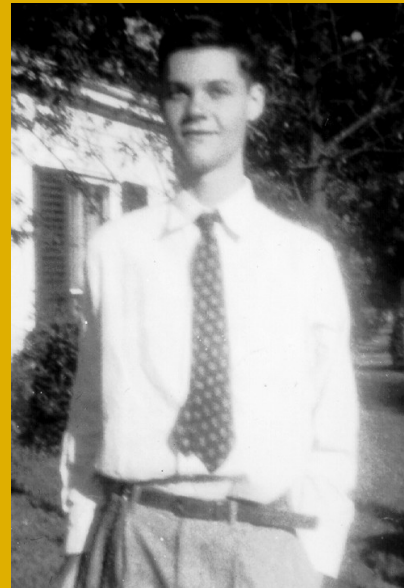
Former Warm Springs Patient Writes Memoir

Roosevelt Warm Springs during the polio era will be a prominent feature of a new memoir by former United States Congressman Ike Skelton.

A native of Lexington, Missouri, Skelton caught polio as a teenager and came to Roosevelt Warm Springs for treatment in the late 1940's. With a distinctive, positive style established by Franklin Roosevelt himself, Roosevelt Warm Springs was the most renowned polio rehabilitation center in the county attracting more than 15,000 polio survivors to Warm Springs from 1927 into the mid 1960s when polio was largely eradicated from the United States by the Salk and Sabin vaccines.

Skelton has returned to Warm Springs several times in recent years, and he credits RWS with putting him on the road to success. Enthusiastic recreation and social life were distinguishing marks of the rehabilitation at RWS, then known as the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation. But the patients were also expected to work hard on their treatment program of physical and occupational therapy. In 2008, during the rededication of the Polio Hall of Fame, Skelton recalled a time when he was almost sent home for taking life at Warm Springs a little too easily. Dr. Robert L. Bennett, medical director of the Foundation, called him to his office and warned him that he would be expelled from Warm Springs if he did not start taking his treatment more seriously.

Skelton took that warning to heart, finished at Warm Springs and applied that principle of hard work to the rest of his education and career. He became a lawyer and set up practice in his home town. His first public office was prosecuting attorney for Lafayette County, Missouri near Kansas City. He was a member of the Missouri State Senate when he won election as U.S. Congressman in 1976 to represent Missouri's 4th District. He served in the U.S. House of Representatives for 34 years, the last four years as chairman of the House Armed Services Committee.



Missouri native Ike Skelton was a polio patient at Roosevelt Warm Springs in the late 1940s. His recently completed memoir about his polio experience, his work as a country

lawyer and his 34-year tenure in the United States House of Representatives will be published in September.

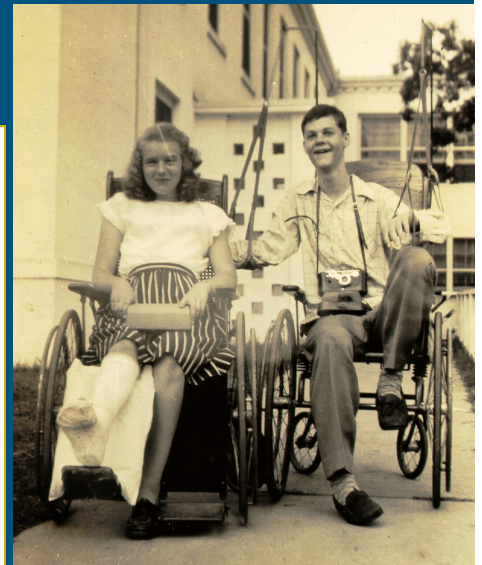


In November 2008, Ike Skelton (on right) helped rededicate the Polio Hall of Fame, a monument on the RWS campus. The Polio Hall of Fame celebrates the international effort to understand the disease of polio and develop the Salk vaccine. Here he speaks with Georgia House of Representatives member Carl Von Epps of Lagrange.

Former Patient Memoirs-continued



The book entitled “Achieve the Honorable: A Missouri Congressman’s Journey from Warm Springs to Washington,” is a memoir of his experience with polio, his experience as a politician and his experience as a country lawyer. It is being jointly published by the State Historical Society of Missouri and Southern Illinois University Press. Once the book is complete it will be available from the web sites of both organizations.



Ike Skelton and pal Lynn Longbottom relax outdoors at Warm Springs where both received polio rehabilitation treatments in the late 1940s.

Ike Skelton shared memories of Roosevelt Warm Springs during a dinner in Georgia Hall Dining Room marking the 50th anniversary of the Polio Hall of Fame. Rotary International, the CDC, the World Health Organization and UNICEF were honored for their efforts to eradicate polio from the world.

Robyn Pynenburg: RWS Employee of the Month

The RWS Employee Moral and Recognition Team selected Robyn Pynenburg as August Employee of the Month at Warm Springs. Pynenburg has worked for the past 5 years as an operations analyst in the facility services department. She is now eligible for the 2013 employee of the year award to be given in the spring of 2014.



August Employee of the Month Robyn Pynenburg receives the award certificate from Executive Director Bill Bulloch.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Kenneth Boone: VR Success Story

Kenneth Boone is a successfully rehabilitated VR client who works at Edwards Interiors Inc. in Pooler. Kenneth has overcome significant barriers to work since he was referred to VR during his senior year at Effingham County High School. School records indicate Kenneth was on a special education diploma track and eligible to receive academic accommodations under an Individual Education Plan (IEP). During the VR counselor's first meeting with Kenneth, he disclosed his previous diagnosis of ADHD and that he takes medication to treat symptoms associated with his ADHD and has done so since he was in elementary school. Kenneth has trouble with processing spoken information and understanding what he has read.

Kenneth's enthusiasm to prepare for and get a job doing "hands on work" captured the IEP team members and eventually led to discussion of a newly established opportunity in Effingham County called Project Search. Once Kenneth was determined eligible for VR Services, he applied, interviewed and was accepted to participate in the Project Search program. The program is designed for transition-aged youth who are eligible for Supported Employment services, and the goal of the program for each student is competitive employment. Since Kenneth had no formal work experience, it was felt that he could better acquire transferable skills through training where applied practice dominates instead of classroom lecture. The VR Program provided multiple services to Kenneth including vocational counseling and guidance, work readiness assessment & training, medication management, supported employment and job placement with follow along services.

Kenneth has been featured in an article in a local community magazine. He is currently working as a filer / sander at Edwards Interiors Inc. in a full time position with a complete benefits package. Kenneth is a true vocational model for success.



Kenneth Boone is a filer/sander
at Edwards Interiors in Pooler

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Yancey Woodfin: VR Success Story Region 10 Thomasville Unit

Mr. Yancey Woodfin came to VR for the second time in February 2012 after having had a prior successful closure in 1998. Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) Harris took over the caseload in July 2012. At that time, Mr. Woodfin had been unemployed for one year. He reported that he needed to work to provide for his family, a wife, four-year-old son, and another child on the way.

Mr. Woodfin initially wanted assistance with post secondary training at Bainbridge College to obtain his commercial drivers license (CDL). When unable to pass the COMPASS, he decided he would like to pursue working as a general laborer. Mr. Woodfin very much enjoys working with his hands and has experience in that capacity.



Yancey Woodfin is a Maintenance Supervisor
with Abby Lake Apartments

Mr. Woodfin completed VR orientation and assessment, and it was noted he had difficulty completing a job application and interviewing. Another factor was not having any clothing appropriate for an interview. Together, Yancey and his counselor developed a work plan which included job readiness skills training, counseling, guidance, and job placement. VR assisted him with clothes and uniforms for job interviews and work preparation.

Rehabilitation Job Readiness Specialist (RJRS) Cynthia Higdon met with Mr. Woodfin and assisted him with job interview skills, completing job applications and conducting job searches. Mr. Harris then referred Mr. Woodfin to Rehabilitation Employment Specialist Michael Edwards. Mr.

Edwards notified the counselor of a position for a maintenance worker. He and Mr. Woodfin thought this would be a perfect fit. He arranged a job interview for Mr. Woodfin. He went to the interview the next day and was hired immediately.

Mr. Woodfin began working as a Maintenance Supervisor with Abby Lake Apartments, Inc. on January 17, 2013. His supervisor speaks very highly of him. He is now able to provide for his family and his self-esteem has improved tremendously since starting his job with Abby Lake Apartments. Mr. Woodfin's case successfully closed in March 2013.



The State Rehabilitation Council met prior to the 2013 Georgia Rehabilitation Association Training Conference. The newly elected officers include Kathy Carlisle (Chairperson) and Christina Peggy Venable (Vice-chairperson). Reappointed Council members Christina “Peggy” Venable and Anisio Correia were joined by new council members appointed by Governor Nathan Deal: Joy Norman, Dana Skelton-Sanders, Jennifer M. Page, Christopher Moder, James Radford, Kenneth Slade, Steve Oldaker, Robin Blount, Dorothea Cadet, Deborah Gay, Kayla Wilson, Deanie Fincher, Anisio Correia, Lewis Wheaton, Liza Leiter, and John Hall. In the photo on the top right, SRC board members introduce themselves at the GVRA board meeting.



Above and to the right, the GRA Training Conference provided multiple opportunities for attendees to learn best practices and continue their professional expansion to ensure better services for people with disabilities in Georgia.

Below, Ray Bishop of Goodwill Industries of North Georgia accepts the GRA Service Award from Ed James and Inger Neal at the 2013 GRA Conference



MARK YOUR CALENDARS!
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
JULY 2013 – MAY 2014
BOARD MEETING CALENDAR
TIME: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

October 9, 2013
November 13, 2013
January 8, 2014
March 12, 2014
May 14, 2014